

COVID-19

COVID-19 health key messages

10 November 2021

Approved messages from the Ministry of Health for use in your communications

Consistent messaging helps us to coordinate our efforts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

New Zealand Alert Level status

Auckland and parts of Waikato are at Alert Level 3 Step 2. These settings will be reviewed on Monday 15 November.

Upper Northland is at Alert Level 3. They will move to Alert Level 2 at 11.59pm on Thursday 11 November.

The rest of New Zealand is at Alert Level 2.

Find out what you need to do at different Alert Levels on the [Unite Against COVID-19](#)

COVID-19 vaccination figures update

Yesterday, **22,178** vaccines were administered. Of those, **5,874** were first doses and **16,304** were second doses administered. To date, **3,333,860** people (**79%** of the eligible population) are fully vaccinated.

[COVID-19 vaccine data and statistics – Ministry of Health](#)

Community cases update

There are **147** new cases of COVID-19 in the community today - **131** are in Auckland, **14** are in Waikato and **2** are in Northland.

[Locations of interest – Ministry of Health](#)

Testing figures update

In the last 24 hours **27,957** tests were processed across New Zealand.

AstraZeneca vaccine option

We are currently working to make the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine available as a second option for people who cannot have the Pfizer vaccine for medical reasons (this is estimated to be only a few hundred people), and for others who have different reasons for wishing to have an option to the Pfizer vaccine.

This includes people who need to be immunised against COVID-19 because of the nature of their work - to protect themselves, their whānau, and the people they work with including patients and school children.

Individuals who are eligible for the AstraZeneca vaccine will also need to be aged 18 or over.

New Zealand has purchase agreements for four COVID-19 vaccines. So far, the Pfizer, AstraZeneca, and Janssen COVID-19 vaccines have been provisionally approved by Medsafe.

Like Pfizer vaccines, AstraZeneca vaccines are administered as a two-dose course to be fully immunised. We expect AstraZeneca vaccines to be available in late November.

Details will be announced next week but work is well underway to prepare for the arrival of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines in the coming weeks. This includes workforce training, establishing the clinics, preparing cold storage facilities and other logistical measures are in place.

The Pfizer vaccine will continue to be the mainstay of New Zealand's COVID-19 immunisation programme.

Pfizer booster gets Medsafe approval

Medsafe has approved booster doses of the Pfizer vaccine for people aged 18 and older. The booster dose will be administered as a single dose at least six months after a person completed their primary course of two doses.

The next step is for the COVID-19 Technical Advisory Group and the Ministry of Health to provide advice to Ministers by mid-November. This is to inform the use of booster doses, including the age limits and interval between when a person has their second dose and a booster dose.

We will have details on the rollout of boosters next week including how to book. We expect around 450,000 people to be eligible before Christmas and we have the capability and scale to deliver additional Pfizer vaccines, as required, quickly and efficiently.

We have already introduced a third primary dose of Pfizer for people who are severely immunocompromised. Evidence has shown that people who are severely immunocompromised require three doses to have the same level of protection as two doses in those who are not immunocompromised. If you are in this group of people, you become eligible for a booster dose six months after your third dose.

As we have done throughout the programme, we will continue use the best clinical advice, informed by international evidence, and we will follow our robust approval processes, before shifting to this next phase of the vaccination programme.

Mandatory vaccinations – new process for health exemptions

As part of the Ministry of Health's work on vaccine mandates and vaccine certificates, a central process is being finalised for the small group of people who need to apply for an exemption on medical grounds.

The application will be used for people who are required to be vaccinated under the mandatory Vaccination Order because they work in roles in health and disability, education and Corrections.

This new process will ensure that all applications for exemptions are properly considered by the right people, and only granted where there are genuine reasons for doing so.

The review panel will be made up of qualified clinicians, and of expert advisors from the sectors for which vaccine mandates have been applied. The health exemptions panel make-up will be confirmed on 10 November.

Read more:

[COVID-19: Mandatory vaccinations – Ministry of Health](#)

[COVID-19: Exemptions and exceptions from mandatory vaccinations – Ministry of Health](#)

Update on variants of SARS CoV-2 virus

The Ministry of Health provides fortnightly updates on the variants of the SAR CoV2 virus that causes COVID-19. Data for the Delta variant is emerging at pace.

[COVID-19: Science news – variants update – Ministry of Health](#)

COVID-19 Health key messages 5 November 2021

Updated COVID-19 testing guidance

The COVID-19 Testing Guidance for the Health Sector has been updated, replacing the testing guidance issued on 11 September 2021. The updated Testing Guidance is for the period 4 November to 15 December.

This testing guidance is intended for the current community outbreak of COVID-19 and includes guidance for when all of New Zealand or any regions are at Alert Levels 2, 3 or 4. Specific updates may be issued with new guidance from the Ministry of Health in response to changing Alert Levels or the nature of the outbreak.

This Testing Guidance will be superseded by any further guidance issued by the Ministry of Health which reflects changes in outbreak status when necessary, or when the “traffic lights” system is introduced to replace the current Alert Level system as DHB regions achieve their 90% fully vaccinated targets.

Included in this update is clarification that an oropharyngeal with bilateral anterior nares swab is available as an alternative to a nasopharyngeal swab for anyone, not just young children and the elderly. A brief update around rapid antigen tests (RATs) is also provided as follows:

- The use of rapid antigen tests (RATs) is being reviewed to assess its potential efficacy as part of the public health response.
- As part of this review, the Ministry is working with its clinical and science advisors to establish:
 - evaluation criteria for selecting tests to be considered for use in New Zealand, and
 - authorisation processes.
- Rapid antigen testing was piloted at Middlemore Hospital’s Emergency Department, Waitemata DHB Delivery Suite and Auckland DHB NICU in October 2021 and has now been expanded for use in managing workforce testing. Twenty nine businesses who have signed up to the MBIE Business Charter are also piloting the use of RATs as part of their health and safety obligations to keep their workforce safe and ensure business continuity. Any further use of RATs will be rolled out in a phased approach to ensure it is appropriately integrated into the public health response.

View the updated guidance on the Ministry of Health’s [COVID-19: Testing plans and testing guidance page](#)

Clinical Management of COVID-19 in Hospitalised Adults (including in pregnancy)

The Ministry of Health has updated their Clinical Management of COVID-19 in Hospitalised Adults guidance. These updates include:

- addition of specific advice for management of COVID-19 in pregnancy
- updated advice on timing of surgery following recovery from COVID-19
- addition of conditional recommendation for inhaled budesonide in patients with mild illness.

View the updated guidance on the Ministry of Health’s [COVID-19: Advice for all health professionals page](#)

Publishing locations of interest

We are making changes to the publishing of locations of interest.

Auckland

Low risk exposure events (for example, drive throughs and supermarkets) are no longer being published as locations of interest because the public health risk is very low. Analysis by the Ministry of Health of exposure events shows no positive cases have occurred from these sorts of locations. Vaccination is adding another layer of protection for our communities.

When there are many locations of interest in a region, as there have been in Auckland, it's harder for people to see new ones that are published. Higher risk exposure events in public spaces (such as gyms, indoor recreation centres, restaurants, cafes and movie theatres) will continue to be published.

For the rest of New Zealand

The Ministry will continue to publish both high and low exposure events in other parts of New Zealand because there are currently much fewer of these.

It's important that people continue to use the NZ COVID Tracer App throughout New Zealand. Notifications are sent through NZ COVID Tracer to people who have scanned into locations of interest wherever possible. If you test positive, you can also share your digital diary with contact tracers. This speeds up the contact tracing process.

More changes coming to our COVID-19 health key messages

From the week beginning 15 November we will be reducing our health key messages to twice-weekly – Tuesday and Thursday.

To continue our efforts to improve accessibility we will now be using Campaign Monitor, an online email tool. You'll no longer need to download documents and will be able to view on your desktop or mobile with ease. If you do not receive the health key messages please check your Junk Email folder and change your settings.

We will no longer include previous days' health key messages – you will only receive the approved messages for the day.